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Volume 16  
Issue 1 *Revelation* (2007-2008 Issue)

Article 18

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5-1-2008

## Present Tense

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### Recommended Citation

Allen, Jennifer (2008) "Present Tense," *The Promethean*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.  
Available at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol16/iss1/18>

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Allen: Present Tense  
**PRESENT TENSE**

*Jennifer Allen*

Small words mesmerize.

*Hello.*

*Oh.*

slip from our lips  
smooth and impenetrable  
as chestnuts.

Under formica,  
twenty digits curve inward,  
spelling out suppositions  
on our palms. Then:

*because,*

*goodbye,*

and our fingers unfurl  
from their fiddlehead grips.

Our arms slide up like levers to wave,  
then fall with the weight of woodcuts,  
hands pressing scenes into silence  
on the flats of our thighs.